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STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA; INR/NESA; INR/B;  
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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: OIIP KMDR TC  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: US TO HIT IRAN; Interview with  
Secretary-General of the Iranian Expediency System

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¶1. Summary: "Al-Khaleej" believes that Arabs should take a clear position on current U.S. military plans, which have been rejected by the American peoples themselves. A UAE columnist in "Al-Ittihad" asserts that all indicators show that the United States is about to start a war against Iran. A columnist in "Al-Bayan" believes that the American administration has sufficient reasons to hit Iran, even while its senior officials deny such a possibility. "Al-Bayan" ran a front-page interview on January 21 with Muhsen Rizaa'i, Secretary-General of the Iranian Expediency System, who said that

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Washington was planning to extend the confrontation into the Iranian depths by igniting sectarian strife.

¶2. "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 90,000), Sharjah-based pan-Arab daily, 1/22: "Our accounts and the accounts of the neo-conservatives"

"... Iraq as it is today, and as of tomorrow, thanks to the strategy of President George Bush and the neo-conservatives, and with the consent of some Arabs, will be worse off, because this strategy will not be the lifeboat which will lead Iraq to safety and stability, but rather to further bloodshed, fragmentation, division and sectarian feuds. Sending in more troops is aimed at further tightening the noose on Iraq and eliminating its spirit of resistance, so that Iraq becomes the US administration's spearhead in the confrontation against Iran under the pretext of confronting terrorism, extremism and its nuclear program... The US administration is facing a political and popular rejection of its plans, that could be catastrophic to America's interests, as stated by Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The disaster that would take place requires a clear and cautious Arab position. The neo-conservatives have their security and oil plans, and that particular plan relating to Israel. We as Arabs should have our plans that should not comply with the American accounts."

¶3. "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000), Abu Dhabi-based Arabic semi-official daily, UAE columnist, Rashed Saleh Al-Oraimi, 1/22 op-ed: "Is it the smell of smoke or fire in the sky of this region?"

"Numerous statements have been publicized by the Western media on the possibility of a military strike against Iran to end its nuclear programs altogether, and to stop the intervention in Iraq. We can

see that the possibility of a strike against Iran is becoming very likely; there is clear evidence of liquidating the Iranian "apparent" presence in Iraq that can not go without noting, such as the arrest of "consular" members in Irbil, and the accompanying threat in the form of "orders" and assurances given by Rice, Gates and their revered President Bush himself. Also, with the subsequent liquidation of most Shiite militias in Iraq, confrontation with Tehran is drawing nearer. "

¶4. "Al-Bayan" (circulation 85,000), Dubai-based Arabic daily, Ahmed Omarabi, op-ed, 1/22: "American wars"

"... It has become very difficult to speculate whether Washington is seriously intending to ignite a war against Iran in the near future. On one hand we see this superpower currently engaged in the preparation of a frightening military crowd by the Iranian coast, while at the same time the senior officials in the Bush administration deny any American plans to strike Iranian targets. The United States, in any case, has a ready justification for such a strike, which is to destroy the Iranian nuclear facilities before Iran would be able to develop its production and take it to the level of nuclear missiles. The question which is currently being discussed among Western experts is: whether it is better for Israel to begin the attack, after which the United States would interfere in support of the Israeli attack... Iran has the raw material stocks that can be converted into manufacturing nuclear bombs, and it is assumed that these stocks are reserved deep down under the ground. Thus, even if the main uranium enrichment facilities in the Nalmanz area were destroyed, Iran can resume the process of uranium enrichment in another secret area..."

¶5. "Al-Bayan" (circulation 85,000), Dubai-based Arabic daily, special 1/21 front-page interview with Muhsen Rizaa'I, Secretary-General of the Iranian Expediency System:

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Muhsen Rizaa'I, Secretary-General of the Iranian Expediency System told "Al-Bayan" that Washington is planning to transfer the confrontation into the Iranian depths by igniting a sectarian strife. Rizaa' added that the American-American confrontation is

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inevitable, comparing Bush's strategy against Iran with that of the hedgehog against the snake. He said: "they attacked Lebanon in summer and want Iraq in winter and the goal is to eliminate Iranian control in these areas... The next two months will explain to the world Bush's strategy. America will intensify the blockade against Iran to mobilize the people against the revolution, assist hostile movements to help wage operations inside Iran, and preach sectarian war." Rizaa'i did not exclude that Washington may carry out missile operations against Iranian nuclear sites.

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